



## FIRST RECOMMENDATION OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

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Project Number:	3016538
Address:	3031 Western Avenue
Applicant:	Brad Hinthorne, Perkins + Will Architects, for Martin Selig Real Estate
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, August 05, 2014
Board Members Present:	Gundula Proksch, Acting Chair Dan Foltz (Substitute) Anjali Grant Alan McWain
Board Members Absent:	Murphy McCullough Matthew Albores
DPD Staff Present:	Michael Dorcy

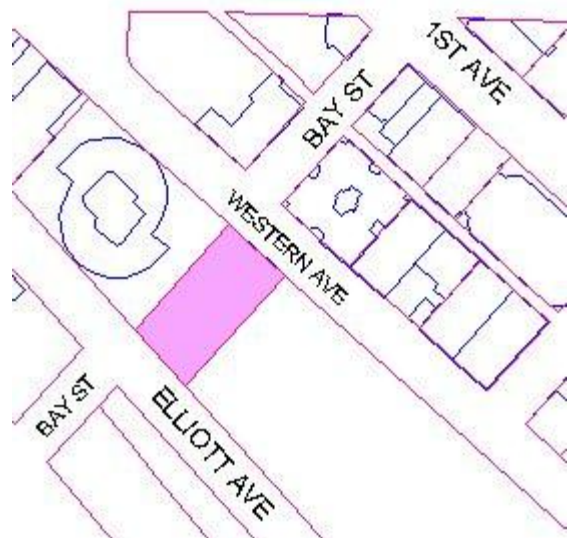
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### SITE & VICINITY

Site Zone: DMR/R 125/65

Nearby Zones: (North) DMC 65  
(South) DMR/R 125/65  
(East) DMC 65  
(West) DMR/R 125/65

Lot Area: 18,700 square feet



**Current Development:**

Currently there is a structure on the site, occupying most of the area south of the vacated Bay Street. Formerly a warehouse building, it is now used for parking and is proposed for demolition in order to accommodate the envisioned development.

**Surrounding Development and Neighborhood Character:**

Belltown is an eclectic neighborhood, both stylistically and in terms of its range of structures. While home to a wide variety of businesses, in more recent years it has been expanding as a downtown residential enclave, to the point where it is now Seattle's densest residential neighborhood. The Belltown Design Guidelines note that, while complementing the historical architectural character of the area is encouraged, imitation of historical styles should be avoided, and new buildings should not appear to have been constructed during a past era.

**Access:**

Access is proposed from an existing curb cut and driveway from Western Avenue which also serves the Airborne Express Building, a structure immediately to the north.

**Environmentally Critical Areas:**

The site contains a mapped portion of landside-prone area on its west slope.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed development is a multifamily residential structure stepping down from 12 to 10 stories, and containing 100 residential units. Parking for 71 vehicles will be contained within the structure, mostly below grade.

**EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE**

The Board's deliberations at the Early Design Guidance meetings (held on February 4<sup>th</sup> and March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014) were initially focused on two issues. The first issue was identified as the *volumetrics* of the proposed building. The second was the "appropriateness" of the various designs set forth, especially as these related to the sculpture park located to the south. Regarding the first issue, one of the Board members suggested that each of the schemes, essentially of the same stepped-height massing, presented an "awkward volume," and resistance to the proposal, described as being too large, was due to the perception of the structure as it rose above Western Avenue. Pushing some of that volume off to the Elliott Avenue portion of the building and presenting a continuous roof top across the site, it was suggested, would go a long way toward alleviating the unease with which the proposed structure was received.

Such a solution would not be possible, however, given the Land Use Code, so the only alternative would be to remove height and volume from that portion of the structure that rose from the Western Avenue edge of the site. In response to that suggestion, the other four Board members indicated they were not overly concerned either with the height or the “step” in the massing of the building which was dictated by the interaction of site topography and Land Use Code. For them, the more important issue was the appropriateness of the face (or faces) the structure presented to the sculpture park and to the broader local community context.

That second issue was further discussed at the second Early Design Guidance meeting where Board comments were centered on two elements. The first was the basic question about what the building wanted to be at that location. Should it attempt to be a sculptural building? Or should it be a backdrop building, one that would leave sculpture and sculpturing to the park? The message from the Board and some of the public at the first EDG meeting seemed to have been that the building should aspire to be a sculptural thing in itself: “The proposed building would sit next to a world class sculptural park,” it was observed, “for years to come it would be eminently visible from within the park.” In this regard the basic challenge would be to design a structure that succeeded at some level emulating the success of the design of the park.

Two of the Board members were of the opinion that the building should aspire to be a background building, one that did not compete with the sculpture or the sculpture park. That did not mean that it could not—or should not—be “elegant.” One of these Board members was more inclined than the other to think the folded-veil motif had some possibilities, but as presented it was “too heroic” and needed to “be quieted.”

The majority of the Board members, who had responded favorably to the folded-veil effect and thought it showed promise, suggested that the scheme had not been worked out to a totally convincing degree, nor should it have been at the EDG phase. Questions regarding the materiality of the veil and of the veil’s ability to effectively function with balconies and mute their potential obtrusiveness, for instance, clearly needed to be worked out and effectively presented as the design developed. An area of agreement between all the Board members was the need to integrate the veil concept, if pursued, into each of the facades of the building. The north façade in particular seemed not to be in step; it was far less developed than the south facade, and in need of clearer integration into the overall building concept. The design team was reminded that this would be a building that would be clearly visible from all four sides and needed to be perceived as conceptually whole.

Packets detailing materials presented at the earlier two Early Design guide meetings, as well as at the Recommendation Meeting of August 5, 2014, are available online by entering the project number 3016538 at this website:

[http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design\\_Review\\_Program/Project\\_Reviews/Reports/default.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Review_Program/Project_Reviews/Reports/default.asp).

The packet is also available to view in the file, by contacting the Public Resource Center at DPD:

**Mailing**    **Public Resource Center**  
**Address:** 700 Fifth Ave., Suite 2000  
              P.O. Box 34019  
              Seattle, WA 98124-4019

**Email:**    [PRC@seattle.gov](mailto:PRC@seattle.gov)

## **RECOMMENDATION MEETING (August 5, 2014) DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

As presented, the preferred concept of the “Folded Veil” had been refined to take the concept design a step further while muting or “quieting” it and by integrating the “veil” motif into the overall composition of the building. As explained by the design team, the architecture shown was conceived as an assemblage of formal and material components that were managed to respond in an appropriate and unique manner to the demands of context, program and performance requirements.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The General Counsel to the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) spoke to concerns that remained for SAM regarding the proposal. These included: the extent to which light and glare emanating from the proposed structure might have impacts on the Olympic Sculpture Park (OSP) and its clientele. Further, no signage should be allowed on the building and strict regulations needed to be enacted and enforced regarding balcony use. SAM would like to review any building surface materials to be employed on the building.

Spokespersons for “Friends of the Olympic Sculpture Park” emphasized the importance of the outdoor sculpture exhibition space and the “iconic” status it had achieved in its relatively brief existence. While the applicants for the proposed building had spoken of “quieting” the proposed building, “friends” thought it untamed; it still “roared.” The proposed building remained “massive” in size and in need of substantially more mitigation to curtail its height, bulk and scale. The design, they maintained, remained insensitive to its context.

The height differential when compared to other buildings in the area, according to other members of the public, was “excessive.” As designed, it still failed to create a clear transition to the height, bulk and scale of nearby building development. For some, the transparency of the balconies and views into the units themselves remained of concern.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARD DEPARTURES**

In continuity with the two Early Design Guidance meetings, there were no departures identified or requested by the applicants.

## BOARD DELIERATIONS

As had been stated at the second Early Design Guidance meeting, the Board members were agreed that there was no fundamental problem with a building being at this location. Nor was there a problem with the step in the building as it was sited on the hillside, a subject of some discussion at the second EDG meeting. As noted by the Chair, this was an issue the Board had discussed and had moved beyond. As noted by one of the Board members, the two-step in height, combined with the remarkable thinness of the overall structure, helped it to appear even less bulky than otherwise. The real challenge for the final design of the building was the treatment of the various faces it presented to its neighbors, which included both the Olympic Sculpture Park and the commercial and residential buildings that constituted its immediate surrounding environment.

In the Board's view, the design of the proposed building had progressed positively in its design since its earlier presentations before the Board. It had been responsive to the Design Guidelines singled out to be of highest priority for the project and showed conformance to the guidance given by the Board. In the Board's view, the building had been definitely been "quieted." In terms of articulated concept, the proposal has achieved a better integration with itself. All four facades were generally "clean and elegant." The north, east and west facades were more evidently pieces of an integrated architectural idea and of an overarching material treatment that was mostly complete and whole. Further, it was the Board's considered opinion that the proposed building worked positively in its location and within the neighborhood context. It did so without being stylistically imitative; it was of its own time.

The challenge that remained, the Board noted, consisted of a relatively few areas of treatment and refinement. First was the roof or cap on the east, taller portion of the residential tower. It seemed overly large and prominent. The Board members were agreed that this element should be pushed back from the east and south edges of the building, even should this require a reduction in the overall size of the amenity areas occupying the rooftop. A second area of refinement potentially involved the selection and configuration of surface materials on the building's south façade. The applicants, the Board agreed, needed to address more formally any potential impacts from light and glare and the possible effects of excessive reflectiveness in the final choice of materials. During the course of the meeting the applicant had expressed a willingness to work with the Seattle Art Museum in the selection of materials, a gesture welcomed by SAM. The Board strongly endorsed that move.

Finally, the applicants were urged, when examining materials and treatments for the south façade, to examine an even more thorough visual integration of the balconies into the folded veil motif so as to tame the strong, countermanding pull toward horizontality they embodied — in order to avoid, as one of the Board members put it, "the appearance of a resort hotel."

## **BOARD DIRECTION**

The Board was split two-two whether the refinements noted above should be accomplished by the applicants working with the DPD Land Use Planner (and SAM), or whether the modifications should be returned to the Board for final approval. The final determination was that the applicants should return for a second, focused Design Review Recommendation meeting, at which time the Board could review and recommend approval of the requested modifications to the design noted above, under *Board Deliberations*.

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